

REMARKS

Claims 1-19 are pending in this application. By this Amendment, claim 18 is amended. No new matter is added by this Amendment. Support for the amendment to claim 18 is found to claim 18 is found inward original claim 8.

Entry of the amendments is proper under 37 C.F.R. §1.116 because the amendments:

(a) place the application in condition for allowance for the reasons discussed herein; (b) do not raise any new issues requiring further search and/or consideration as the amendments merely incorporate subject matter from claim 8 into claim 18; (c) do not present any additional claims without canceling a corresponding number of finally rejected claims; and (d) place the application in better form for appeal, should an appeal be necessary. The amendments are necessary and were not earlier presented because they are made in response to arguments raised in the Final Rejection. Entry of the amendments is thus respectfully requested.

I. Allowable Subject Matter

Applicant thanks the Examiner for the indication that claims 1-17 and 19 are allowed.

II. Rejection Under 35 U.S.C. §103

Claim 18 is rejected under 35 U.S.C. §103(a) as being unpatentable over U.S. Patent No. 5,726,796 (Regener) and further in view of U.S. Patent No. 4,892,374 to Ackerman. This rejection is respectfully traversed.

Claim 18 is amended to include the allowable feature of claim 8. In particular, claim 18 recites that the branches are provided with two or more paths. This feature is not taught or suggested by Regener, whether taken alone or in combination with Ackerman.

For the foregoing reason, claim 18 is not rendered obvious by Regener and Ackerman.

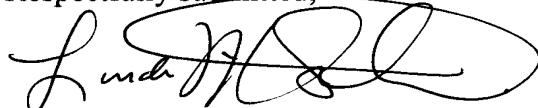
Withdrawal of the rejection is respectfully requested.

III. Conclusion

In view of the foregoing, it is respectfully submitted that this application is in condition for allowance. Favorable reconsideration and prompt allowance of the claims are earnestly solicited.

Should the Examiner believe that anything further would be desirable in order to place this application in even better condition for allowance, the Examiner is invited to contact the undersigned at the telephone number set forth below.

Respectfully submitted,



James A. Oliff
Registration No. 27,075

Linda M. Saltiel
Registration No. 51,122

JAO:LMS/eks

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OLIFF & BERRIDGE, PLC
P.O. Box 19928
Alexandria, Virginia 22320
Telephone: (703) 836-6400

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